

Identifying Special Needs Populations

In Harm's Way: Identifying Special Needs Populations Ahead of Wildland Fire in the
Community of Vista, California

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Abstract

The problem addressed by this research is the Vista Fire Department has not identified vulnerable special needs populations that may need to be evacuated in the event of a wildfire emergency. The purpose of this research is to identify special needs populations living within identified wildland urban interface threat zones. Descriptive research methods were used to answer the following questions: (a) What are the wildland urban interface threat zones within the Vista Fire Department's jurisdictional area? (b) What defines special needs individuals? (c) What is the best method to locate special needs individuals and groups? (d) What are alternative internal and external approaches to identifying special needs populations? (e) What is the best overall strategy to identify special needs populations within the wildland urban interface threat zones?

The research was conducted by literature review, from post incident analyses of wildfire incidents, hurricanes and the special populations evacuation component successes and failures. Interviews were conducted with subject matter experts, and special populations specific documents and evacuation plans were reviewed.

The findings revealed gaps in planning for special populations identification and evacuation in wildfire emergencies. Concrete methods to address the problem were determined and adapted to the specific circumstances in the Vista community. Recommendations included defining the wildland threat areas using the Fire and Resource Assessment Program maps, defining the specific special populations in the Vista community, and addressing those populations through planning, education, and preparation prior to a wildland urban interface event.

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Introduction

Following hurricane Katrina, a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report noted that the majority of the 1,300 persons that perished were some of society's most vulnerable members: the elderly, disabled, and low income persons. Many of these people lacked the ability to provide for their own transportation in order to evacuate (GAO, 2006). During the 2007 Firestorms in San Diego, a T.V Channel 8 news reporter was broadcasting a live report from a partially destroyed Rancho Bernardo neighborhood, houses smoldering and still aflame, when an elderly man using his cane, walked out of his house to check his mailbox. The man and his wife had no idea that the area had been evacuated and that their home was nearly destroyed by the fire. In fact, the couple had no knowledge of the firestorms that were gripping the southern part of the state.

During hurricane Katrina, some residential care facilities in New Orleans were successfully evacuated while others relied on flawed plans that left them to their own devices to move and care for their patients, resulting in the deaths of some of the residents. In other care facilities there were horror stories of elderly and disabled residents who perished, some in the rising flood waters, some after days of neglect (Brinkley, 2006). In 2004 the Bush administration issued Executive Order 13347 charging Federal agencies to focus on individuals with disabilities when developing emergency preparedness plans. In 2006 the Post Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act was passed, and FEMA issued guidelines for accommodating individuals with disabilities in disasters (Parsons, Fulmer, 2007).

The Vista community faces a number of potential natural and man made disasters. One of the most likely to occur is a major wildland urban interface fire. In an event such as this it will be critical to identify, notify and evacuate residents in the path of the fire, including our most vulnerable residents, those with special needs.

The problem addressed by this Applied Research Project (ARP) is the Vista Fire Department has not identified vulnerable special needs populations that may need to be evacuated in the event of a wildfire emergency. The purpose of this research is to identify special needs populations living within identified wildland urban interface threat zones. The research approach will be descriptive and will include a literature search, interviews of local agencies who serve special needs individuals and review of special needs evacuation plans of other jurisdictions. The research will answer the following five questions: (a) What are the wildland urban interface threat zones within the Vista Fire Department's jurisdictional area? (b) What defines special needs individuals? (c) What is the best method to locate special needs individuals and groups? (d) What are alternative internal and external approaches to identifying special needs populations? (e) What is the best overall strategy to identify special needs populations within the wildland urban interface threat zones?

Background and Significance

Vista California lies seven miles inland from the Pacific Ocean in Northern San Diego County. With a population of 113,687, encompassing 38 square miles, Vista's terrain includes a coastal plain and gentle slopes in the west and progresses to lofty hills on the eastern border which provide breathtaking views of the Pacific (*Vista Fire Department Strategic Plan, 2009*). The Vista Fire Department formed as volunteers in 1928. When the city incorporated in 1963 it

became a full-time paid department (Citygate and Associates, 2004). Currently the department operates out of six fire stations. Five type-1 engines and one quint aerial ladder are staffed with three personnel and run as first-due, all-risk companies. Three type-3 brush engines are cross-staffed by engine and quint personnel. A light and air/rehab unit and a California Office of Emergency Services all risk Type II rescue engine are also cross staffed by station personnel. Three Paramedic ambulances are staffed by two Firefighter/Paramedics each. The department is led by a Fire Chief, two Deputy Chiefs, three shift Battalion Chiefs, a Training Chief and an Emergency Services Officer who oversees paramedic operations. The Fire Prevention Bureau has three personnel, recently reduced from seven. The department ran 10,475 calls in 2010 (Personal Communication, R. Ford, March 14, 2011).

The City of Vista's location in San Diego County places it in one of the most risk active environments in the United States. According to the *City of Vista Continuity of Operations Plan*, [COOP](2008): "Jurisdictions in San Diego county are vulnerable to a host of hazards, including earthquakes, wildfires, tsunamis, flooding, radiation releases, hazardous materials spills, droughts, civil unrest, terrorism, transportation disasters, and disease pandemics. Since January 1991, San Diego County has had nine federally declared disasters. The firestorms of 2003 caused the worst damage in the history of San Diego and California" (COOP, 2008). The location of San Diego County at the Southern terminus of California and the United States, bordered by mountains on the East and the Pacific Ocean on the West, places it in unique physical isolation. With affluent Orange County and the mega-metropolis of Los Angeles to the North, Mexico to the South and desert to the East, even the geo-political landscape does not favor the region.

The semi-arid climate in Southern California is legendary for mild sunny days. Temperatures on the coastal plain, where Vista is located, rarely reach freezing in winter and average in the

seventies most of the year (Weather.Com, 2010). Rainfall averages 9.9 inches per year that results in drought adaptive vegetation in the wildland areas (San Diego Water Authority, 2010). While these vegetation types can survive on little precipitation, the resins they contain are explosively flammable and play a major role in fire propagation. During late summer, fall and early winter, Southern California experiences wind events called Santa Ana's. This weather phenomenon produces winds up to 100 miles per hour that blow from the mountains to the ocean. Humidity is driven down into the single digits while temperatures soar to near or above 100 degrees. Fire ignition potential hovers at 100 percent and when ignition occurs, disastrous fire storms are born, creating what are termed "fire hurricanes" with hurricane force winds blowing burning debris and destroying nearly everything in its path. San Diego County has the dubious historical distinction of most acreage burned, and most firefighter and civilian deaths by wildfire in California (Personal Communication, B. Davidson, November 5, 2009). The City of Vista Emergency Operations Plan [EOP](2008) notes recent significant local wildfire incidents including: 2007 Witch Creek Fire, 198,000 acres, 1500 structures destroyed, 2 fatalities and 39 firefighter injuries; 2007 Harris Fire, 90,440 acres, 206 homes destroyed, 505 structures damaged, 5 deaths, 55 injuries to civilians and firefighters; 2007 Rice Fire, 9,000 acres, 250 structures, 5 firefighter injuries (burned to the Vista Fire Protection District border); 2006 Horse Fire, 16,681 acres, 23 injuries (EOP, 2008); 2003 Cedar Fire (initial attack crews and air resources were unavailable due to other fires burning in the region), 280,278 acres burned (15% of San Diego County), 2,232 homes destroyed, 550 homes damaged, 15 deaths, 113 injuries. (Lakeside Historical Society, 2003).

Clearly wildland urban interface fire is a significant threat to all communities in Southern California. The after action reports from the 2007 wildfires identified a number of issues

surrounding special needs populations during the response. In the 2007 San Diego Firestorms over one million people were evacuated while over six thousand firefighters worked the fires. In the large scale and scope of this type of incident, how likely is it that special needs populations will be missed? Pre-planning and pre-incident efforts must be made to address the vulnerable special needs populations in Vista to lead to more successful incident operations and ultimately save lives.

This ARP is based on the content of the Executive Analysis of Fire Service Operations in Emergency Management course and applies its principles to identifying vulnerable special needs populations within the wildland urban interface threat zones of the Vista Fire Department. Further, with the information provided by this ARP, a more complete community risk and capability assessment can be performed and more thorough disaster planning can be accomplished. This ARP addresses four of five United States Fire Administration (USFA) objectives: (a) reduce the loss of life from fire in the age group 14 years old and below, (b) reduce the loss of life from fire in the age group 65 years old and above, (c) reduce the loss of life from firefighters, (d) respond appropriately in a timely manner to emerging issues (USFA, NFA, 2003).

Literature Review

What are the wildland interface threat zones within the Vista Fire Department jurisdictional area? The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection has a Fire and Resource Assessment Program (FRAP) that looks at state controlled lands, forests', open space, unincorporated lands that border municipalities, as well as urban areas that are within municipalities. This program generates GPS-based maps of urban interface areas in San Diego

County including the Vista Fire Department's jurisdictional area. The maps show areas by hazard severity zones that are classed as: (a) very high, (b) high, (c) moderate, (d) non-wildland/urban, and (e) urban unzoned. The criteria used for making these hazard class determinations include fuel model, fuel type, fuel loading, fuel age, fuel integrity (contiguous fuel beds without natural or man made fuel breaks) and fuel proximity to values at risk. Access in and out of the area for residents and fire suppression resources and proximity of fire suppression resources are also considered. Weather patterns and trends and fire history in an area are included in the equation (Caluza, et al. 2010). Together these factors are considered to assess the likelihood of risk of a major wildland fire, or as it applies to Vista's jurisdiction, a major wildland urban interface fire. Approximately 43% of Vista's jurisdictional area is zoned as moderate and higher (see Appendix A). For planning purposes and for identifying populations in at risk areas, these maps are a definitive source.

Prior to the completion of the FRAP study, the Vista Fire Department classified areas in the jurisdiction as either "High Hazard" wildland areas or not high hazard wildland areas. Similar criteria was used to designate these areas based on physical surveys looking at fuel type, fuel loading, fuel age, and fuel proximity to structures. Access, water supply, and local fire history were also considered. The author took part in several of these surveys. The results were used in response mapping and resource allocation, as well as fire prevention code application. The maps created using this method actually zoned much less area as hazardous when compared to the FRAP maps that were created by the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. All locally determined high hazard areas do now fall within the very high and high severity class zones of the current FRAP maps. When these maps and reports were made available to local

governments and the public, the department adopted them and began using them to determine high hazard wildland interface areas and threat zones.

What defines special needs individuals? The definitions of special needs populations are nearly as numerous as the sources that are searched. In some, it is a practical definition, others a political definition, while still others a social label or descriptor. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) defines special needs as:

Populations whose members may have additional needs before, during, and after an incident in functional areas, including but not limited to: maintaining independence, communication, supervision, medical care. Individuals in need of additional response assistance may include those who have disabilities who live in institutionalized settings; who are elderly; who are children; who are from diverse cultures; who have limited English proficiency or are non-English speaking; or who are transportation disadvantaged (FEMA 2009).

A GAO report on “vulnerable populations” following Katrina stated:

Identifying these populations and determining their needs present challenges because their overall size, location, and composition can be difficult to determine in advance of an emergency. For example, while these populations include the elderly, low income individuals, and persons with disabilities, during disasters transportation disadvantaged populations can also include people who either by choice or circumstance do not own or have access to cars. They can also include people with limited English proficiency and people who do not permanently reside in the community such as tourists, temporary workers, and the homeless (Bascetta, 2006, p. 8)

The California Emergency Management Agency (CALEMA), uses the term, “functional needs population” to replace those formerly known as “special needs population”. CALEMA goes on to define those with functional needs as:

Populations whose members may have additional needs before, during and after an incident in functional areas, including but not limited to: (a) Maintaining independence, (b) communication, (c) transportation, (d) supervision, and/or (e) medical care. Individuals in need of additional response assistance may include: (a) Those who live in institutionalized settings, (b) older adults, (c) children, (d) those from diverse cultures, (e) those who have limited English proficiency or are non-English speaking, or (f) those who are transportation disadvantaged (CALEMA, 2009, p. 2).

The Unified San Diego County Emergency Services Organization (USDCEO), has developed an Operational Area Emergency Plan made up of annexes that apply to different aspects of emergency operations. Annex Q addresses evacuation and defines special needs populations in this way:

The evacuation of individuals who have special needs or are vulnerable pose many difficult challenges with respect to notification, evacuation, emergency transportation, sheltering requirements, and information dissemination. For the purposes of this annex, special needs populations include at-risk populations and are defined as people who are elderly; people with disabilities and other medical conditions; people with limited English proficiency; people with hearing and sight impairments; people who are in institutions; and people without access to private vehicles. Locating people with special needs is one of the most challenging aspects of this annex. (USDCEO, 2010).

Local jurisdiction plans are termed “supplements” to the county annexes. The City of San Marcos Emergency Operations Plan, annex Q supplement defines special populations as: (a) People who are elderly, (b) people with disabilities and other medical conditions, (c) people with limited English proficiency, (d) people with hearing and sight impairments, (e) people who are in institutions; and (f) people without access to private vehicles (San Marcos, 2010).

What is the best method to locate special needs individuals and groups?

The research revealed a number of different methods used to locate special needs individuals. The National Organization on Disability (NOD) suggests focusing on concentrations of people with disabilities in locations such as senior housing developments, residential care facilities, schools, and other organizations that serve people with disabilities (NOD, 2009). Preexisting citizen networks and citizen outreach activities such as neighborhood watch, meals on wheels, senior watch and senior ride share are excellent methods to locate and contact special populations individuals (Bascetta, 2006). Non-governmental organizations (NGO’s) such as home health care organizations and occupational and physical therapists interact with and serve special needs individuals (Parsons, Fulmer, 2007). Community Based Organizations (CBO’s) including faith based organizations, tribal or cultural community groups, and service groups, are noted to have a special commitment and ability to reach and assist special needs populations (Nick et al., 2009).

Special populations registries are another method used to locate special needs individuals. A pre-registration process enables a local agency the ability to pre-identify and subsequently contact special needs persons in the community in time of need (Giaccone, 2008). In a number of references the importance of involving persons with special needs or disabilities in planning and identification of special needs persons was encouraged (NOD, 2009; CALEMA, 2009,

Bascetta, 2006). Utilizing persons who are part of the special needs community opens pathways to those communities. This works particularly well in foreign language communities, culturally defined communities and even transient and homeless communities. All of these methods can help identify and locate special populations individuals.

What are internal and external approaches to identifying special needs populations?

Internal and external approaches provide a number of options to assist in identifying special needs populations. The city of San Marcos identifies several of these in their Emergency Operations Plan Supplement including utilizing business license records for retirement homes, health care facilities and care giver facilities (San Marcos, 2010). The city of Vista has a senior center and senior nutrition program that services a large number of seniors. In addition, a “Meals on Wheels” program delivers meals to those seniors who are unable to come to the senior center. These points of contact would prove very valuable for the elderly segment of the special populations group. The city also maintains sports fields that host leagues that are made up of predominantly Spanish speaking players, providing an opportunity for outreach with pre-incident information, communication, and foreign language planning tools. The Vista Sheriff’s substation runs “Neighborhood Watch” programs as well as the “You are not Alone” program which provides further access to special populations individuals in the community.

The California Department of Social Services maintains a searchable data base listing all licensed care facilities in the state by zip code. The list encompasses a wide variety of special population facilities such as: (a) adult day care, (b) adult residential facility, (c) adult residential care facility for persons with special health care needs, (d) child care centers, (e) group homes, (f) residential care facility for the chronically ill, and others. The database gives the location, contact information, type of facility, and number of residents. (see Appendix F). This

information can be used in preplanning and rapidly overlaid on the frap maps, or incident maps to locate facilities with special populations and accurately estimate the number of persons there. The best use of the database information is to identify where these facilities are, how many persons are there, and review the plans that they are required to have in place for evacuation (J. Berg, personal communication, February 22, 2011). An important part of a facility evacuation plan review is to insure the facility staff know the plan, know where the plan is, and know when the reverse 911 system calls, to activate the evacuation plan immediately (M. McClain, personal communication, March 15, 2011).

What is the best overall strategy to identify special needs populations within the wildland urban interface threat zones?

The best overall strategy, based on the research, is clear. Given the fluid nature of communities and the unpredictable nature of wildland fire, a multi-faceted approach utilizing a variety of resources is best. The National Emergency Management Resource Center (NEMRC) cited in the San Diego 2007 wildfire after action report that special needs groups were under represented in emergency planning and preparedness (NEMRC 2008). The idea that emergency services will be able to develop lists of individuals and groups of special populations and respond to, and assist all of them, even given adequate time is not realistic. In the time compression of an approaching hurricane where there are hours or days before the event, the job of coordinating resources and evacuating persons in time is daunting at best (Landes, 2009). In a wildfire scenario, there are usually only minutes or hours to accomplish these tasks. The idea that public safety services can access, assist, and evacuate every special needs person is unrealistic. The keys to success begin with education, planning, and preparation before the

event. Given the proper information and planning assistance, the majority of special needs individuals will be able to help themselves evacuate (Yannello, 2007).

Identifying special needs populations must be approached in the same manner. Utilization of all resources at hand is necessary to provide the best chance of capturing the most special needs persons (University of Washington, 2006). The plan must encompass NGO's, CBO's, local and county programs, cultural and foreign language based programs, schools, special populations service organizations and volunteer organizations. Engagement through outreach and public education will also continue to open doors to more special needs persons through word of mouth and networking amongst these groups (Yannello, 2007). This community-wide approach works best to distribute preparation messaging and reach the most individuals. Part of this educational effort must contain identification of high fire risk areas with emphasis placed on preparation and planning for those special populations individuals who live within those boundaries.

Identification of care facilities in these areas is easily accomplished through the state search database and those facilities can be evaluated and addressed for evacuation planning and the possibility of protecting in place.

Procedures

The procedures followed for this project included the researcher's participation in the Executive Analysis of Fire Service Operations in Emergency Management course (NFA, 2010) at the National Fire Academy (NFA) in Emmitsburg, Maryland. Pre-course materials, course syllabi, handouts and recommended reading were excellent resources. The author's personal experience participating in several largescale wildfire conflagrations, including the largest fire in California history, and several others at the operational and command levels was utilized to direct research and interviews from a practical perspective. The Learning Resource Center at the

National Fire Academy was extensively searched, and related applied research projects and articles were reviewed. A significant amount of material was available on hurricane related evacuations and special populations included in hurricane preparation and evacuation. In particular, information on hurricane Katrina was well documented and much time was spent reviewing that incident. Much information on the mistakes and shortcomings regarding special populations during Katrina were made from Douglas Brinkley's book, "The Great Deluge". To gain valuable perspective from both the operational view and that of the special populations persons left behind, that book was read in its entirety. The author detailed unblinkingly the horrifying results of failure to address this subject area.

Little information was available specific to wildland urban interface special populations identification and evacuation scenarios, but much of the hurricane related material was very useful and similar in nature. An extensive internet search was then undertaken for information on identification of special needs populations and special population evacuation plans around the world. Again, a rich collection of hurricane related data was available, but little that related to wildland interface fire, with the exception of documents related to local and regional fires. These documents did address the subject matter of special populations to different extents. During the examination of these documents and after-action reports on local events, and during the interview process with local experts, it became clear that although there was an awareness of the problem, no clearly defined solutions had yet been arrived at for identifying and evacuating special needs populations in a wildland interface fire scenario.

The focus of this ARP was specific to developing a program for the City of Vista, however the need to develop a template for regional use was repeatedly acknowledged. A review of plans and programs in the region confirmed the need for this research and development of a plan to

address the problem. Throughout this research project Battalion Chief Jeff Berg, the Disaster Program Coordinator for the City of Vista was interviewed. Chief Berg has extensive experience in disaster planning at the local and regional levels and is the primary author of the City of Vista Emergency Operations Plan. Many ideas and research material were discussed where his experience and insight were invaluable. Marilyn Anderson, the Emergency Services Officer for the Vista Fire Department, was also interviewed on several occasions. Her background in mass casualty and disaster medical operations is extensive, and her input was extremely valuable. Both in house interviewees were exposed to the research questions and the interview discussions were guided by them. After findings were developed, further discussions and examinations were made of the research material, and many valuable conclusions were considered.

Access was gained to San Diego County Sheriff Lieutenant M. D. McClain, who had been assigned in the Sheriff's Communication Center during the 2007 wildfires and had operated the reverse 911 system during that event. Since evacuations are a function of law enforcement in regional disaster plans, and the county sheriff is the contract law enforcement agency for the City of Vista, this interview was valuable in both directions.

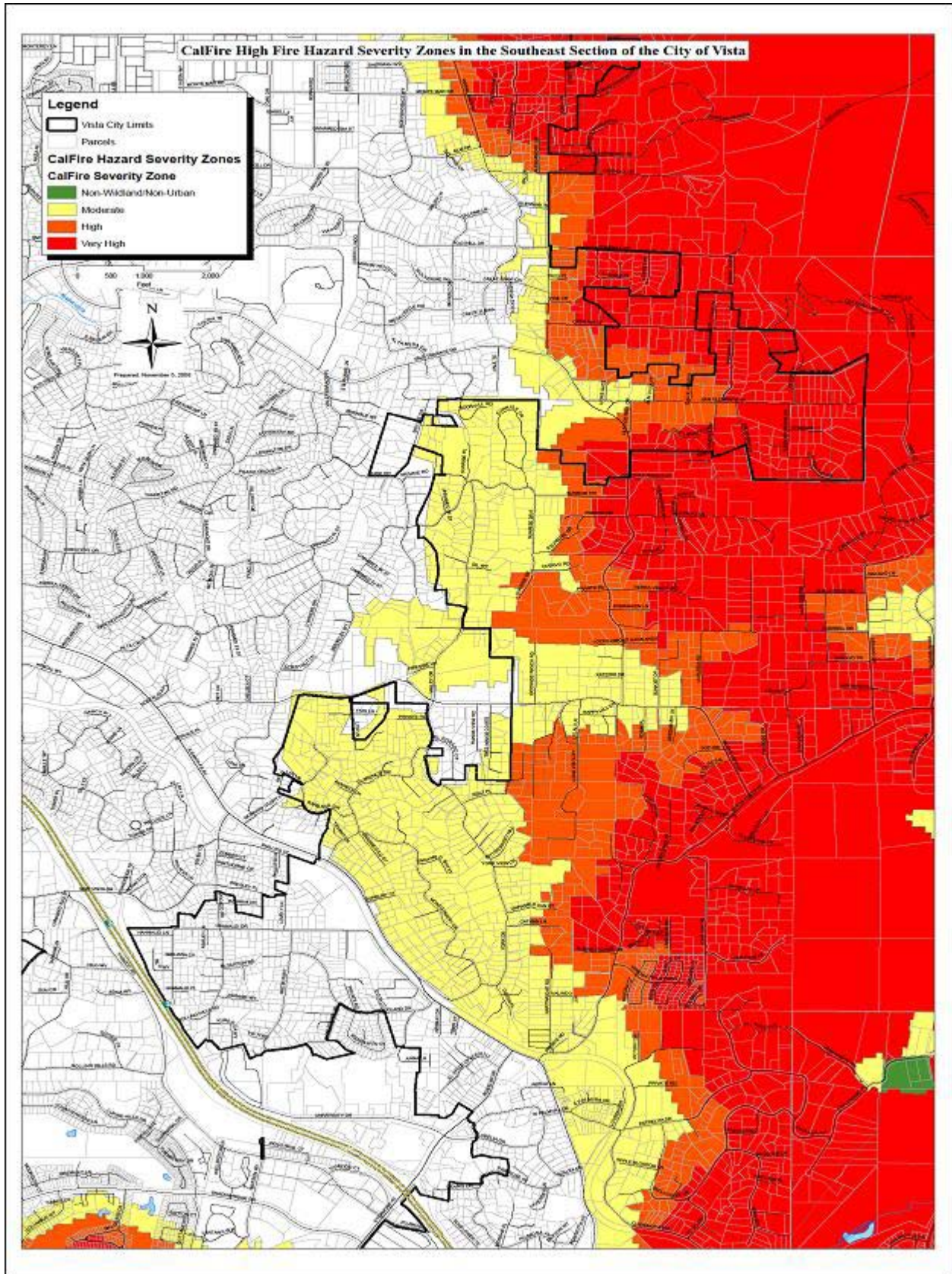
Documents at the Federal level from the GAO and FEMA, at the state level, the regional and the local level were all reviewed in this area. Much information on defining special populations was available, but some was contradictory. As discussed in the research, special populations should be specifically defined by the local jurisdiction based on local population factors. After-action reports of recent regional wildland urban interface conflagrations were particularly helpful in this area as so little wildland fire specific information was available.

Results

A considerable amount of information was reviewed in this subject area to conclusively answer the questions posed in this research project.

Question #1: What are the wildland urban interface threat zones within the Vista Fire Departments Jurisdictional area?

Wildland urban interface threat zones have been well identified in the FRAP maps provided to the department by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Appendices A – F). With the FRAP maps, wildland urban interface threat zones can be identified specifically and in detail down to addresses and lot numbers as illustrated in the southeast quadrant FRAP below.



Utilizing this level of detail and specificity, individual special population residences or those living in facilities in these areas can be readily identified as being within a wildland urban interface threat zone. Other methods of tracking and identification can be applied to the FRAP maps to cross reference whether or not the location falls within a wildland urban interface threat zone.

Question #2: What defines special needs individuals?

The research included input at all levels on this question from federal to local and included differing perspectives. Applied to the wildland urban interface situation, the definition must include anyone who will encounter difficulty rapidly understanding instructions and self-evacuating in front of a developing wildland incident. Therefore the scope is more inclusive and necessarily broad to include: (a) People who are elderly, (b) people with disabilities and other medical conditions, (c) people with limited English proficiency, (d) people with hearing and sight impairments, (e) people who are in institutions (f) people without access to private vehicles, and (g) people with livestock or large pets

Question 3: What is the best method to locate special needs individuals and groups?

The research showed that there was no single best method to locate special needs individuals and groups. A multi-faceted approach is the best way to locate and reach the most people. Facets to the approach plan could include the following (a) focus on locations where people with disabilities concentrate, (b) utilize existing networks that interact with special populations, (c) utilize community groups, NGO's and CBO's, (d) special populations registries, and (e) involving members of the special needs communities in all phases of planning for special needs populations operations. Since the special needs umbrella is diverse and far reaching in the Vista

community, this multi-faceted approach is necessary to ensure the most effective method of identifying special needs individuals.

Question 4: What are alternative internal and external approaches to identifying special needs individuals and groups?

Alternative internal and external approaches include taking advantage of pre-existing programs that interface with the special needs community such as (a) Senior Nutrition Program, (b) “Meals on Wheels” program, (c) “You Are Not Alone” program, (d) “Neighborhood Watch” program and, (e) California care facility searchable database. Attending community events where special populations are represented such as cultural or sports events is another way to communicate with those special needs groups.

Question 5: What is the best overall strategy to identify special needs populations within the wildland urban interface threat zones?

The best overall strategy to identify special needs populations within the wildland urban interface threat zones is to utilize a layered and multi-faceted approach utilizing resources already in the community. Government based efforts such as senior services, senior meal programs, adult and special needs day care, parks and recreation programs for seniors and special needs groups, “You Are Not Alone”, and “Neighborhood Watch” can all be used. NGO’s such as in-home care businesses and organizations, physical and occupational therapists, special health care supply companies as well as CBO’s with faith based organizations, cultural and service organizations, and other volunteer organizations are all important partners in the effort. Using this community based approach is also cost effective and does not supplant the efforts already underway to serve these special communities. Using the information gathered with the FRAP map will identify and classify those persons by risk profile in their location. This

information can be used in a number of ways, but according to experience noted in the research, the real emphasis should be placed on education and preparation with special needs persons (Yanello, 2007). The more informed and prepared special needs persons are for all emergencies, the less impact they will have on emergency services and the more likely they are to have a better outcome during and after the event. Special populations individuals who have developed their own plan will usually also have a place to go besides a shelter which further unburdens emergency operations and serves their special needs much better (S. Hansen, personal communication, March 15, 2011). Identification of special needs persons in and of itself does nothing to solve the problem. Educating independent special needs persons to self-evacuate or have a plan with assistance to evacuate should be the real goal (J. Berg, personal communication, February 22, 2011).

Discussion

Determining threat zones for a wildland urban interface event in the Vista Fire Department jurisdictional area has been accomplished through the FRAP documents that are made available to the department and the public. These maps contain the accuracy and detail on which to base evacuation decisions and planning and provide a platform from which to search for special populations residents to assist them in their preparation and planning efforts for evacuation. The FRAP is an accepted standard that is acknowledged by the fire service, government and the insurance industry as a standard in the identification of wildland urban interface threat zones and will be the document used in Vista's plan. Further, in Vista's jurisdiction, the previous process for determining high wildland risk areas and properties agrees with and is encompassed by the FRAP program and has been locally accepted as the source document on which codes and ordinances are enforced and evacuations are based. Overlay of these maps can assist in planning

and outreach efforts to identify not only individuals, but facilities that are in the wildland threat zone. Specific to wildland urban interface fire emergencies, the FRAP maps are foundational in determining those threat zones.

The research showed that most sources agreed in a general way on who should be included in a special needs population. These descriptions were arrived at from the perspective lens of the organization authoring them, some very wide for all risks and some more focused. Viewed from the perspective of a wildland urban interface fire problem, the definition of special needs populations becomes clear: these will be the persons who will be unable to get out of the way of an approaching wildfire without extra effort or assistance by an outside entity. The paradigm differs from the general scenarios because of time compression. When a wildland urban interface fire is on the move there are generally minutes to evacuate from its path.

Post Katrina definitions all contained references to “transportation disadvantaged” persons (FEMA, 2009, Bascetta, 2006, CALEMA, 2009, USDCESO, 2010). In a wildland urban interface fire scenario this group would be at a distinct disadvantage and needs to be addressed. According to 2009 census estimates, 6.61% of Vista households do not own a vehicle (City of Vista, 2009). Residents without access to private vehicles could also include subgroups such as latchkey children, migrant workers in clandestine camps, and homeless persons in clandestine camps. The peak time of the day for wildland fire ignition and propagation is 13:00 hrs to 17:00 hrs due to maximal daytime drying and pre-heating of fuel beds (NWCG, 2010). This time correlates to latchkey children arriving home and awaiting their parents’ arrival home from work with a car.

Time of year also correlates fire season to high migrant populations for agricultural work in the area, increasing the numbers of individuals living, often physically, in the fuel bed in

clandestine camps. It is by no means unusual to have wildland fires start as a result of cooking or warming activities in these camps.

The mild climate, proximity to one of the main county jail facilities, and the economy, all add to Vista having a robust homeless population, any number of whom camp in wildland areas and like migrant workers, wish to remain unseen. These situations present even more obstacles to finding and notifying these subsets of the transportation disadvantaged populations ahead of an incident.

Vista's demographic makeup is 46% Latino, and 35% of Vista residents speak another language as their primary language other than English in the home (City of Vista, 2009). This has significant implications in addressing evacuation messaging and instructions and creates a potentially large pool of citizens that require communication through interpreters or Spanish language materials. In addition it was noted in the after action reports of the 2007 firestorms in San Diego County: "There was an apparent lack of sign language interpreters to assist people who are deaf or hard of hearing" (NEMRC, 2008). Communication obstacles will require action by responding entities to accommodate and overcome these barriers to provide for the safety of these individuals.

Not all persons who are elderly will need to be included into the special needs population as they may be able to self-evacuate when instructed. However, a number of elderly residents will need evacuation assistance and transportation provided for them. This is also true of the disabled population, the sight impaired and those with significant medical conditions. Each individual's preparation before the event and existing support network will determine the level of reliance on emergency services.

One group that does not fit the typical mold of special needs populations, but often requires special assistance and are often difficult to evacuate, are large pet and live stock owners. The author has personal experience in the 2007 Witch Creek fire of residents refusing to evacuate without their horses. In one case the author investigated a crew fire shelter deployment and burn-over at a ranch where residents were trapped after refusing to leave their horses. Though the horses were killed, the crew and the resident narrowly escaped. In a rural environment with significant numbers of residences with live stock, this category of resident must be planned for with appropriate accommodations.

The best method to locate special needs individuals and groups is to utilize a number of approaches. Each individual method examined in the research will reach some number of people, but each method by itself will also miss some number of people. By integrating methods, the maximum number of people in this diverse group of target individuals and groups can be identified. For example, focusing on locations where people with disabilities congregate will net many contacts with this segment of the population. In Vista, the senior center will facilitate contact with hundreds of seniors in the community. For purposes of evacuation however, other methods will also need to be considered as a number of seniors do not use the services of the senior center and would not be contacted through this method.

Special populations registries are another method used to locate special needs individuals, particularly those living independently. Locally, the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency distributes a list quarterly of those individuals participating in their Home Support Services Program. County wide this represents a number of individuals, but when broken down by zip code Vista had only four individuals listed on the registry. These lists really only represent a drop in the bucket of the special needs populations. These lists are also

temporary in nature as these individuals have serious medical conditions, and many transition to care facilities from home, move to another area for treatment, or pass away (M. Anderson, personal communication, January 3, 2011). In a CALEMA report on California special populations registries it was noted that of 45 counties that responded to the survey, only 14 had registries. The study concluded that registries were only part of an overall plan to locate and evacuate special needs persons. Further, the study indicated that registries, even when stated to the contrary, provide a false sense that during an emergency registered persons will be evacuated and cared for. Registries were also noted to be personnel intensive to create and maintain, and were of limited value during a large scale evacuation (CALEMA, 2008).

The use of NGO's, CBO's, community groups, support groups and services, and members of the special needs community themselves, are keys to a successful strategy to locate and evacuate special needs populations. An essential part of this process revolves around establishing contacts with these groups prior to an emergency and provide preparedness information and opportunities through and to them. Citizens with special needs who develop plans, prepare for emergencies, and arrange their own evacuation plans do not impact emergency services.

Alternative approaches can be taken to identify and interact with special populations groups. As previously stated, a strategy that includes multiple methods will be the most effective. Taking advantage of existing resources and programs that interact with target special populations groups is an efficient way to identify them. For example, utilizing the state care facility database, it can be quickly determined which facilities are within the wildland threat zones. These facilities can present serious challenges to rapid evacuation as they often contain moderately to fully dependant persons. Care facilities are required by the state to have evacuation plans on site. These plans must be reviewed to be sure they are feasible and also

insure that they do not all have the same resources listed to facilitate their evacuation of residents. These plans must be known and accessible to facility staff, and they must understand how to activate the plan when appropriate or when instructed to do so by a reverse 911 call. Pre-planning of these facilities in the wildland interface areas may also reveal that some facilities are defensible. If incident commanders have the resources available to commit and the knowledge that the facility is defensible, sheltering in place may be a viable option.

Programs such as “Meals on Wheels” and “You Are Not Alone” have essentially already identified a segment of the special needs population that requires outside assistance in daily living activities and would likely need assistance in evacuation. Utilization of these client lists would provide an up to date map of where resources and assistance will be needed on an individual basis. Integration of these service efforts along with “Neighborhood Watch” may provide opportunities to help special needs individuals plan for neighborhood assistance for evacuation, rather than relying on emergency services.

These efforts are necessary to identify and address special needs populations during wildfire events in Vista. It must be stated that in the process of facilitating a program like this, only a nominal amount of additional effort and resources would be required to extend the public education, planning, and preparation effort to encompass all risks in the community such as fire, earthquake and flood in conjunction with wildfire preparation. Once the work of community outreach is achieved with the various groups and programs to facilitate locating special populations, expanding the effort would maximize the benefit to the special populations community and overall community at large.

Recommendations

The nature of special populations in an emergency setting brings a significant amount of variables into play in any given community and emergency. It is imperative therefore, that local factors are thoroughly examined when considering the approach to developing a plan to identify and evacuate vulnerable special needs persons. The recommendations that follow are specific to the Vista community, Vista's unique special populations, and the specific wildfire threat to the Vista community. The plan elements however are readily applicable in the region and even easily adaptable to other localities and physical threats to those communities.

For the purposes of determining the wildland urban interface threat, the FRAP maps are the definitive source in California. These maps are specific and accurate and should be used to locate and identify group and individual special populations facilities and residences.

Vista's special populations should include anyone who will encounter difficulty rapidly understanding instructions and self-evacuating in front of a developing wildland incident. This should include: (a) People who are elderly, (b) people with disabilities and other medical conditions, (c) people with limited English proficiency, (d) people with hearing and sight impairments, (e) people who are in institutions (f) people without access to private vehicles, and (g) people with livestock or large pets. As noted in the research, people without access to private vehicles must include the migrant worker population, the homeless, latch-key children and visitors to the area who do not have access to a car. Those in institutions must include those residential, care, treatment, and group home facilities that are located throughout the urban interface areas. Rather than focus on the physical location of each individual who belongs to a special population group to insure their evacuation, it is far more effective to target them by category and through those services, circumstances or affiliations that help identify them.

Utilizing these entities not only to identify, but to access and educate these individuals will cover large segments of the special populations community.

Elderly persons are an identified vulnerable special populations group. Vista has several senior specific programs that interact with seniors and should be used to identify, educate, and prepare seniors. Those services include the senior nutrition center, “Meals on Wheels”, parks and recreation programs for seniors and “You Are Not Alone” programs. NGO’s in Vista include adult and special needs day-care services, in-home care businesses and organizations, physical and occupational therapists and special health care supply companies. CBO’s such as “Neighborhood Watch”, faith based organizations, service organizations, and other volunteer organizations all interact with the elderly special population segment. Many of these organizations also serve disabled persons as do disability specific groups and associations. North County Transit District, that supplies public transportation, has regular contact with that segment of the population that does not own a car and can be used to identify and access them. The Vista Community Clinic has a large Spanish speaking client base and has been an excellent community partner for safety messaging. The clinic would be a bridge to the Spanish-speaking community.

Overwhelmingly the research demonstrated, as has experience, that it is not easy to address special needs populations evacuations once an incident has begun. The key is planning, education, and preparation. The hurricane based data supports this recommendation in the setting of hours and days of advanced warning. In the wildfire scenario with sometimes only minutes to react, it is imperative that planning, education and preparation occur ahead of the event. Planning with the FRAP maps and the identified local special populations groups must occur and must involve members of the special populations communities. Outreach and education must be done to prepare these groups and individuals for evacuation. Educational

programs and materials are available through FEMA, and the state of California specifically, for special populations persons to prepare for evacuation from all hazards. This information can be distributed through the multiple methods discussed previously such as NGO's, CBO's, service groups, community programs, the fire department and the media. A consistent, ongoing effort must be maintained to address all groups, as many special populations groups are in a state of constant change, as are their individual situations and personal support networks. These key efforts are critical in eliminating the vast majority of special populations individuals from needing assistance from emergency services during evacuations. It must also be pointed out that the potential to extend the educational effort to incorporate all risks to these populations is there. In fact, the effort and cost of educating for wildfire evacuations that places the information in front of, or in the hands of, the special populations audiences can easily incorporate other disaster and fire prevention messages that will immensely benefit them. This highly efficient approach is strongly recommended.

Facilities that house special populations persons are often the most vulnerable, and due to their numbers, the most challenging to evacuate. These facilities are easily identified by using the state licensing facility index and searching by zip code. Interaction with facility staff, review and validation of required evacuation plans, inspection and evaluation of physical facilities for egress routes and the potential for sheltering in place should be accomplished. Facilities deemed appropriate for sheltering in place must be entered into preplans and premise history so incident commanders can decide the best course of action and evacuate or assign resources to defend those facilities during the incident if evacuation is not performed.

Internal education and planning must also include Emergency Operation Center (EOC) and Department Operations Center (DOC) personnel. It is appropriate during an emergency to

delegate responsibility to manage the evacuation of facilities and individuals to the EOC or DOC.

The problem of identifying and evacuating special needs populations ahead of wildland fire is complex and challenging, but necessary to protect those who are the most vulnerable among us - those in harm's way.

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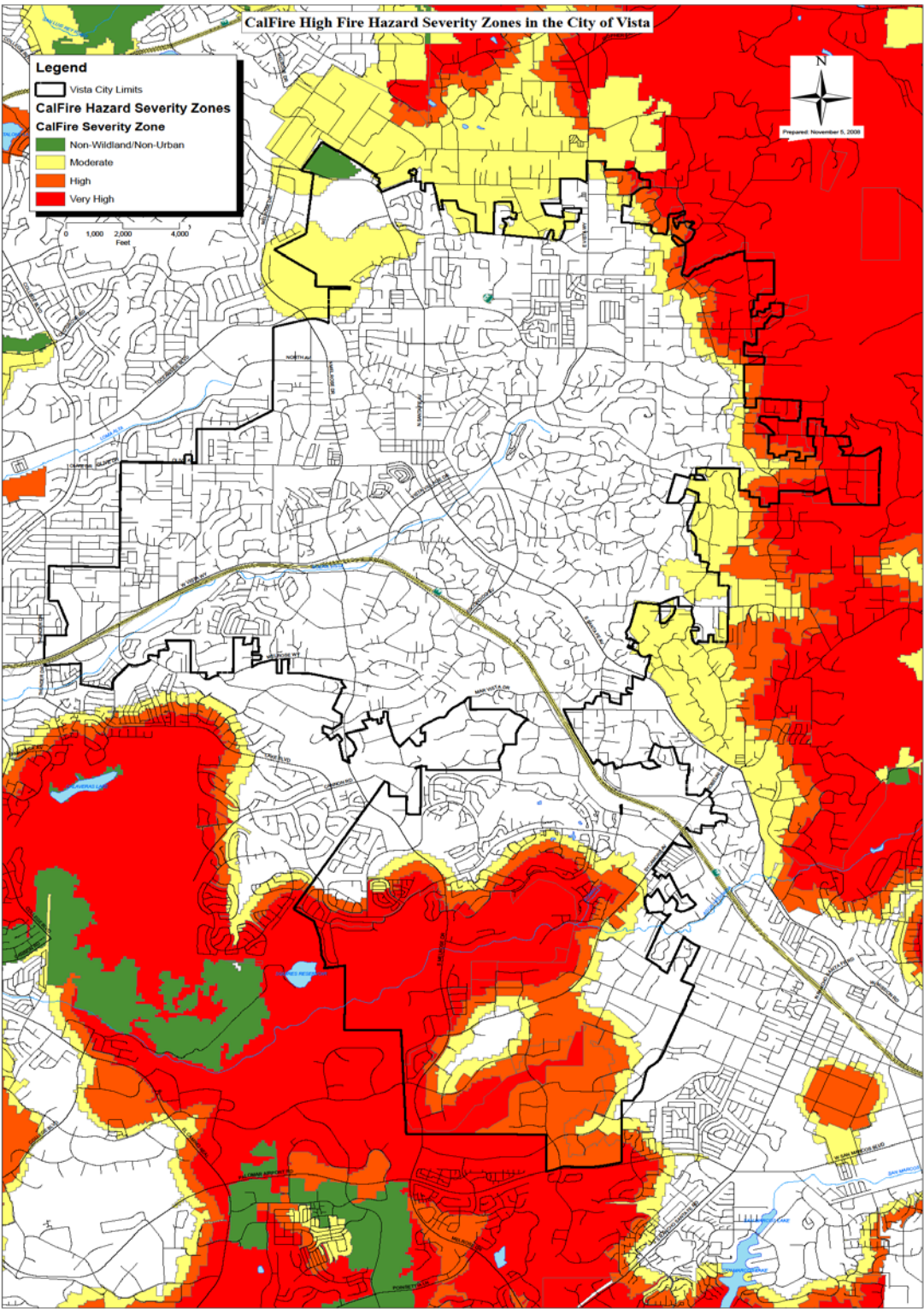
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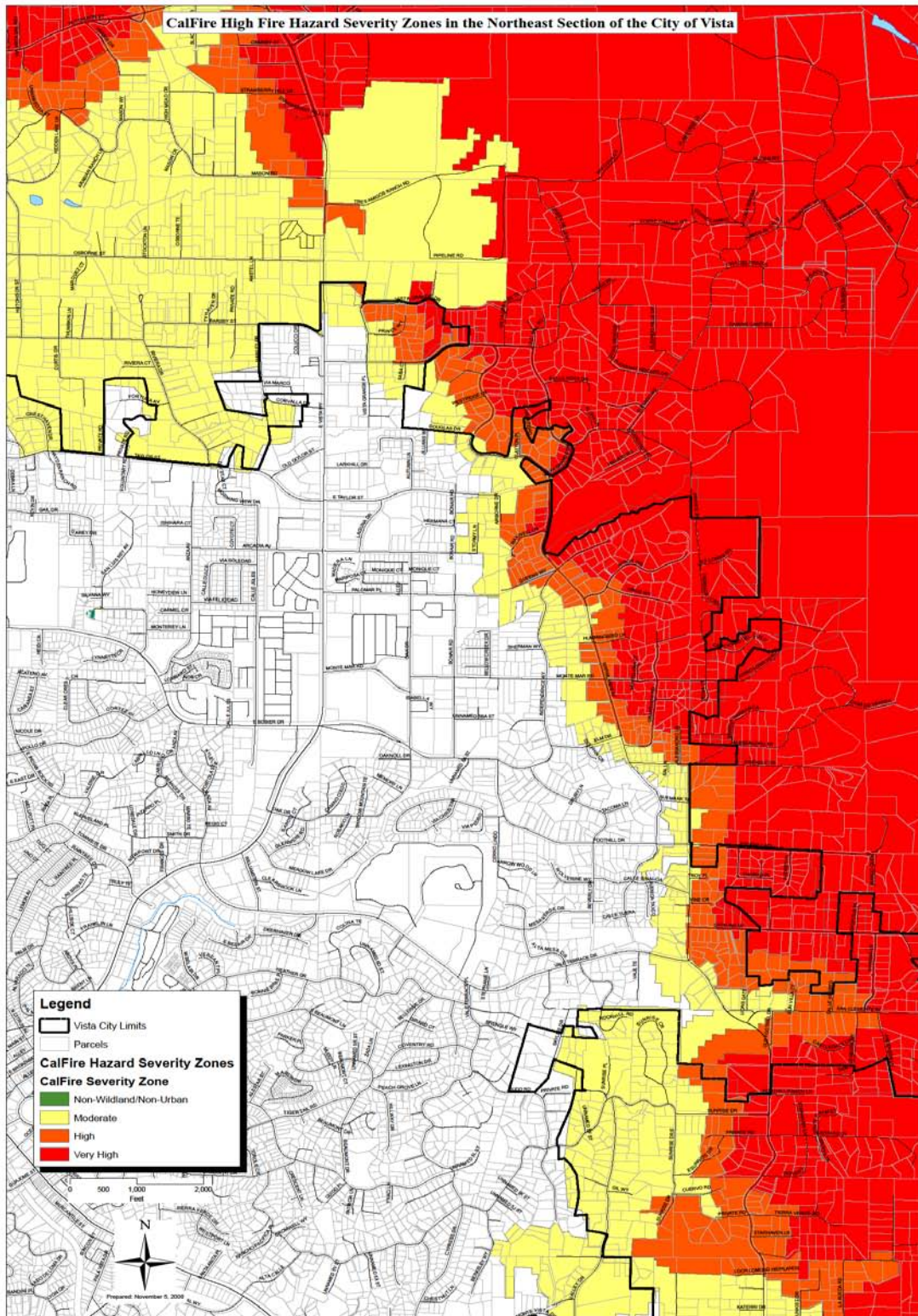
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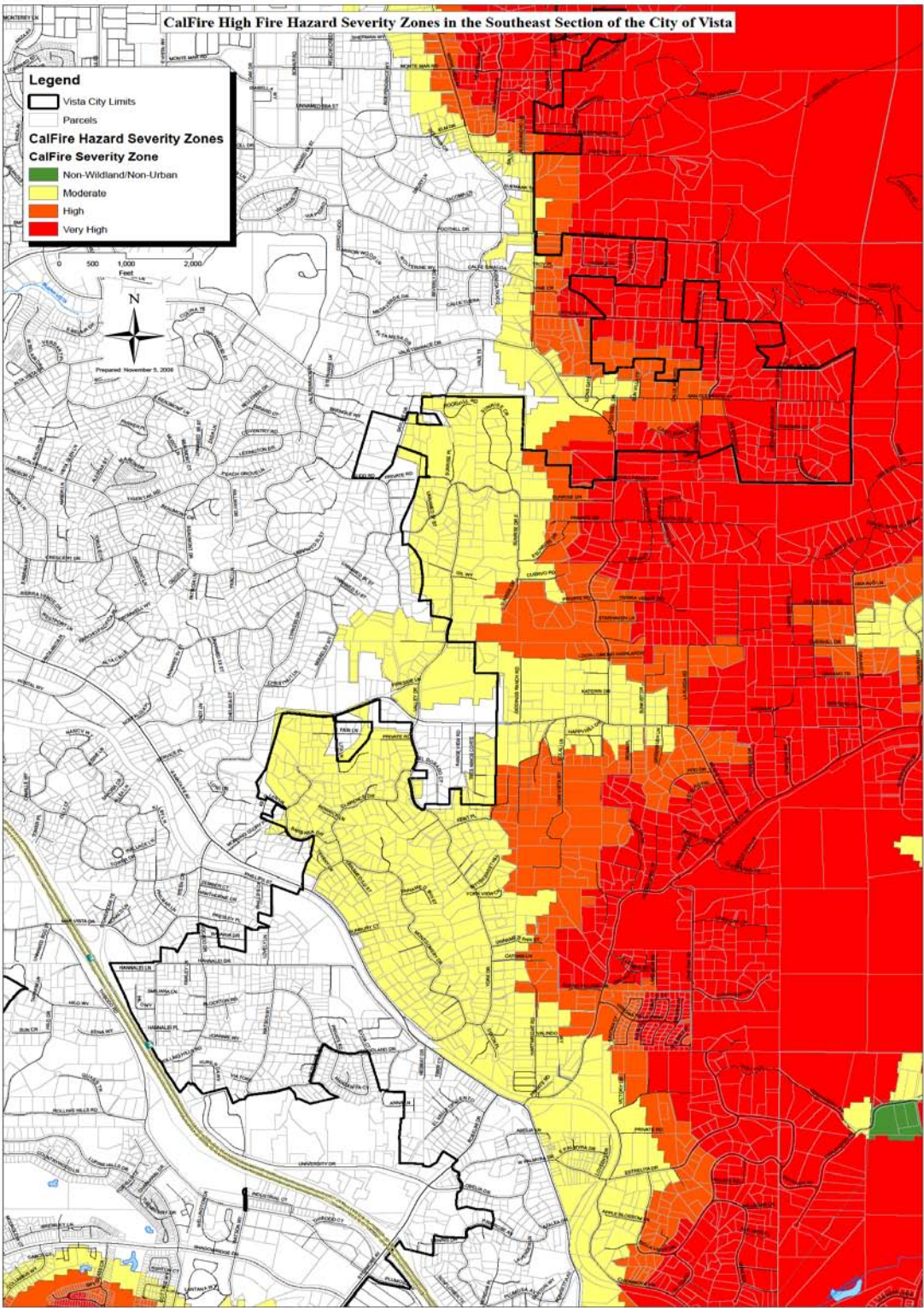
Appendix A



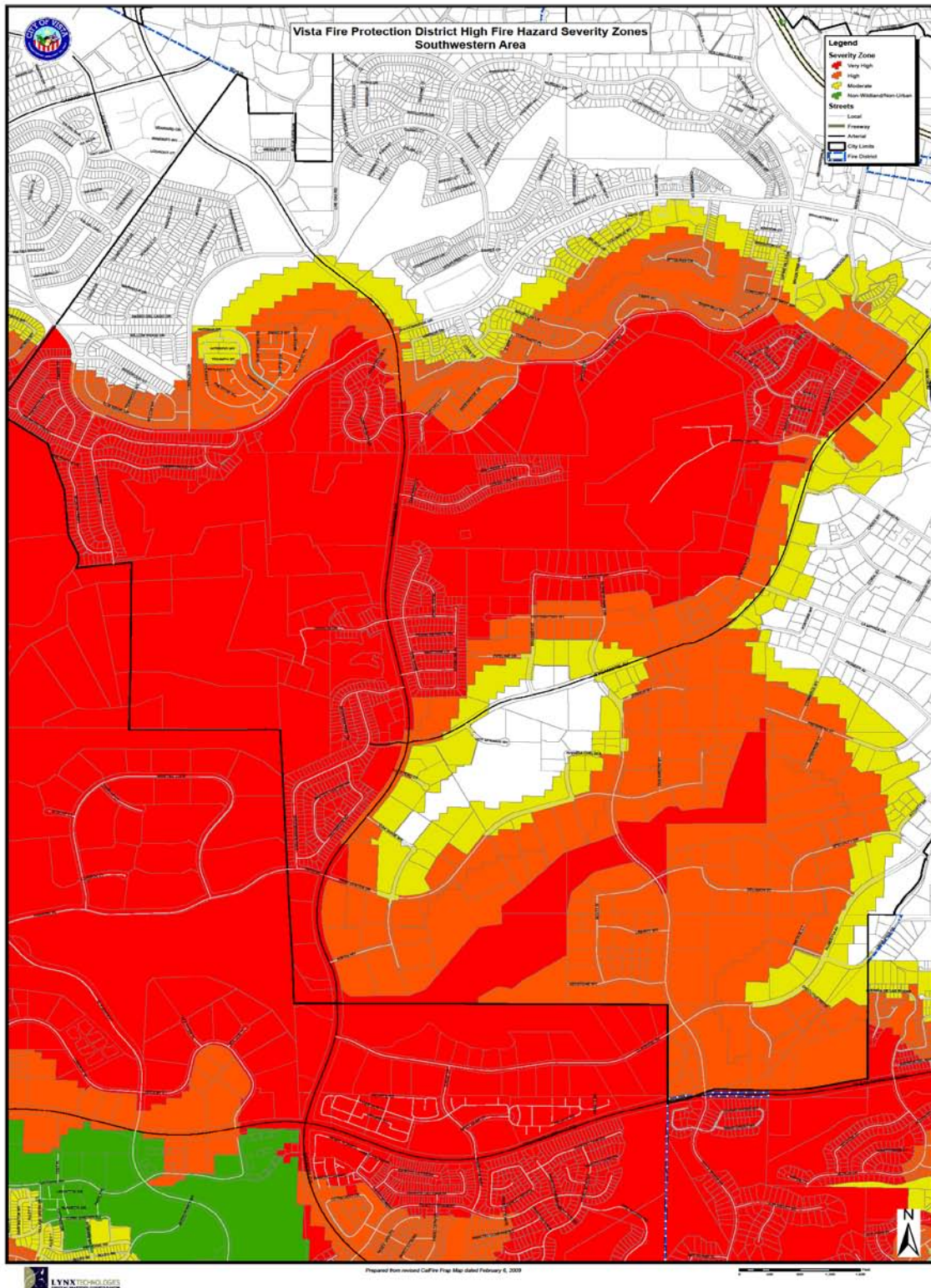
Appendix B



Appendix C



Appendix D



Appendix E

[California Home](#)

Friday, March 11, 2011




[CCLD Home](#)

[Facility Types](#)

[Feedback](#)

Search for a Licensed Facility

 My CA

CCLD Facility Search Form

Your search:

Facility Type: Residential Care for the Elderly

Zip Code: 92084

There are **29** facilities in your search results.

Clicking on the facility street address will display a map to the facility.

This information is updated weekly.

Listed facilities are not necessarily open for business. Call the District Office (D.O.) phone number given for each facility if you have any questions about a particular facility.

Facility No: 374601445 Capacity: 0006

License Status: Licensed

ANGEL'S TOUCH II

[138 BELLERIVE DR](#)

VISTA, CA 92084

(760) 295-0500

Contact: LUZ VELASCO

DO: SO. CAL SC/RES (08)

DO Phone: (619) 767-2300

Facility No: 374602617 Capacity: 0003

License Status: Licensed

AUNT CLARA'S RETREAT

[248 AMELIA COURT](#)

VISTA, CA 92084

(760) 732-0634

Contact: NEWSOME, JEANETTE

DO: SO. CAL SC/RES (08)

DO Phone: (619) 767-2300

Facility No: 374602645 Capacity: 0006

License Status: Licensed

BUENA CREEK RESIDENTIAL CARE

[3008 BUENA CREEK ROAD](#)

VISTA, CA 92084

(760) 295-3630

Contact: ILICH, VESNA

DO: SO. CAL SC/RES (08)

DO Phone: (619) 767-2300

Facility No: 374601871 Capacity: 0006

License Status: Licensed

ELEVADO VIEW

[2128 ELEVADO RD](#)

VISTA, CA 92084

(760) 806-6530

Contact: JIRI ZATRAPA

DO: SO. CAL SC/RES (08)

DO Phone: (619) 767-2300

Facility No: 374602880 Capacity: 0006

License Status: Licensed

ELM COTTAGE

[1575 ELM DRIVE](#)

VISTA, CA 92084

(760) 295-2821

Contact: MICHELLE EMMONS

DO: SO. CAL SC/RES (08)

DO Phone: (619) 767-2300

Facility No: 374600960 Capacity: 0012

License Status: Licensed

EVERGREEN CHALET

[1178 EVERGREEN LANE](#)

VISTA, CA 92084

(760) 630-8122

Contact: GEORGE MOZES

DO: SO. CAL SC/RES (08)

DO Phone: (619) 767-2300

Facility No: 374602982 Capacity: 0006

License Status: Licensed

FOOTHILL COTTAGE

[1648 FOOTHILL DR](#)

VISTA, CA 92084

(760) 295-6221

Contact: SUSAN RIVERA

DO: SO. CAL SC/RES (08)

DO Phone: (619) 767-2300

Facility No: 374601291 Capacity: 0006

License Status: Licensed

FOREST VIEW GUEST HOME

[1145 EVERGREEN LANE](#)

VISTA, CA 92084

(760) 945-4779

Contact: DILLARD-BENDER, CAREY M.

DO: SO. CAL SC/RES (08)

DO Phone: (619) 767-2300

Facility No: 374602397 Capacity: 0006

License Status: Licensed

GOLDEN RETREAT - SENIOR RESIDENTIAL CARE

[1119 WARMLANDS AVENUE](#)

VISTA, CA 92084

(760) 295-7435

Contact: DAMJANOVICH, DONNA

DO: SO. CAL SC/RES (08)

DO Phone: (619) 767-2300

Facility No: 374600775 Capacity: 0006

License Status: Licensed

HART'S PLACE

[2331 MONTE VISTA DRIVE](#)

VISTA, CA 92084

(760) 598-9066

Contact: CLAVEL L. HART

DO: SO. CAL SC/RES (08)

DO Phone: (619) 767-2300

Facility No: 374600016 Capacity: 0006

License Status: **Probationary**

HILL VIEW COTTAGE

[1974 BUENA CREEK ROAD](#)

VISTA, CA 92084

(760) 727-4187

Contact: KITTINGER, PHYLLIS

DO: SO. CAL SC/RES (08)

DO Phone: (619) 767-2300

Facility No: 374602681 Capacity: 0006

License Status: Licensed

HOME SWEET HOME

[1152 SAL LANE](#)

VISTA, CA 92084

(760) 842-8760

Contact: BABIC, ANKA POROBIC

DO: SO. CAL SC/RES (08)

DO Phone: (619) 767-2300

Facility No: 374602378 Capacity: 0006

License Status: Licensed

LONE OAK VILLA

[1691 LONE OAK ROAD](#)

VISTA, CA 92084

(760) 415-7290

Contact: TATJANA DJORDJEVIC

DO: SO. CAL SC/RES (08)
DO Phone: (619) 767-2300

Facility No: 374602685 Capacity: 0006

License Status: Licensed

LONE OAK VILLA II

[712 BOZANICH CIRCLE](#)

VISTA, CA 92084

(760) 842-7590

Contact: DJORDJEVIC, TATIANA

DO: SO. CAL SC/RES (08)

DO Phone: (619) 767-2300

Facility No: 374602505 Capacity: 0006

License Status: Licensed

MELROSE PLACE

[906 STRAWBERRY HILL LANE](#)

VISTA, CA 92084

(760) 643-0499

Contact: NORISA DOMILOS

DO: SO. CAL SC/RES (08)

DO Phone: (619) 767-2300

Facility No: 374600860 Capacity: 0006

License Status: Licensed

PINE VALLEY HOME CARE

[1530 MONTE VISTA DRIVE](#)

VISTA, CA 92084

(760) 630-6381

Contact: DOMILOS, NORISA

DO: SO. CAL SC/RES (08)

DO Phone: (619) 767-2300

Facility No: 374600770 Capacity: 0006

License Status: Licensed

QUEEN'S MANOR HOME CARE

[1025 BONNIE BRAE PLACE](#)

VISTA, CA 92084

(760) 806-9455

Contact: JANE PARLADE
DO: SO. CAL SC/RES (08)
DO Phone: (619) 767-2300

Facility No: 374602547 Capacity: 0252

License Status: Licensed

RANCHO VISTA

[760 EAST BOBIER DR](#)

VISTA, CA 92084

(760) 941-1480

Contact: ROB TAKAMI

DO: SO. CAL SC/RES (08)

DO Phone: (619) 767-2300

Facility No: 374600114 Capacity: 0015

License Status: Licensed

RESTFUL HOMES

[1266 PLEIADES DRIVE](#)

VISTA, CA 92084

(760) 727-0439

Contact: JEAN LACOMBE

DO: SO. CAL SC/RES (08)

DO Phone: (619) 767-2300

Facility No: 374602678 Capacity: 0006

License Status: Licensed

ROXIE'S CHATEAU 4

[929 CHUMASH TRAIL](#)

VISTA, CA 92084

(760) 859-6303

Contact: ROXAS, TERESITA G.

DO: SO. CAL SC/RES (08)

DO Phone: (619) 767-2300

Facility No: 374602670 Capacity: 0006

License Status: Licensed

SILVER OAK COUNTRY ESTATES I

[138 SUN VILLA COURT](#)

VISTA, CA 92084

(760) 415-8216
Contact: ECKERT, LORENA
DO: SO. CAL SC/RES (08)
DO Phone: (619) 767-2300

Facility No: 374602671 Capacity: 0006
License Status: Licensed
SILVER OAK COUNTRY ESTATES II
[146 SUN VILLA COURT](#)
VISTA, CA 92084
(760) 415-8216
Contact: ECKERT, LORENA
DO: SO. CAL SC/RES (08)
DO Phone: (619) 767-2300

Facility No: 374602754 Capacity: 0006
License Status: Licensed
SILVER OAK COUNTRY ESTATES III
[143 SUN VILLA CT](#)
VISTA, CA 92084
(760) 415-8216
Contact: LORENA ECKERT
DO: SO. CAL SC/RES (08)
DO Phone: (619) 767-2300

Facility No: 374600710 Capacity: 0006
License Status: Licensed
SUNSET HILLS HOME CARE
[2255 GUAJOME LAKE PLACE](#)
VISTA, CA 92084
(760) 945-0484
Contact: JANE TOTANES
DO: SO. CAL SC/RES (08)
DO Phone: (619) 767-2300

Facility No: 374602541 Capacity: 0006
License Status: Licensed
VISTA CARE
[461 ESTRELITA DRIVE](#)

VISTA, CA 92084
(760) 295-7453
Contact: ANA RADOVANOVIC
DO: SO. CAL SC/RES (08)
DO Phone: (619) 767-2300

Facility No: 374602779 Capacity: 0006
License Status: Licensed
VISTA MOUNTAIN HOME & CARE FOR THE ELDERLY
[2425 VISTA MOUNTAIN DRIVE](#)
VISTA, CA 92084
(760) 630-4782
Contact: VALLEDOR, RENTON L.
DO: SO. CAL SC/RES (08)
DO Phone: (619) 767-2300

Facility No: 374601774 Capacity: 0005
License Status: Licensed
VISTA PALM RESIDENTIAL FACILITY
[1181 EUCALYPTUS AVE](#)
VISTA, CA 92084
(760) 940-4221
Contact: GUBATON, YOLANDA R
DO: SO. CAL SC/RES (08)
DO Phone: (619) 767-2300

Facility No: 374601357 Capacity: 0006
License Status: Licensed
VISTA ROYAL ASSISTED LIVING
[2336 VISTA ROYAL](#)
VISTA, CA 92084
(760) 598-1435
Contact: DJORDJEVIC, SASA
DO: SO. CAL SC/RES (08)
DO Phone: (619) 767-2300

Facility No: 374602904 Capacity: 0006
License Status: Licensed
VISTA SUNRISE ELDER CARE



[1904 CRESTHAVEN DRIVE](#)

VISTA, CA 92084

(760) 639-2985

Contact: CIRENIA CLAVEL MATHIOUS

DO: SO. CAL SC/RES (08)

DO Phone: (619) 767-2300